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STATINTL

Clip the CIA's Wings

By Richard Starnes



THE vast, bumbling bureaucracy of the Central Intelligence Agency has lately been revealed as the profligate disbursing agent of millions of unaccountable U.S. dollars.

There can be no surprise in this: CIA responds to no checkrein, and is blessed with the same sort of lavish appropriations that make it such a pleasure to run up a budget for the FBI. The important difference, of course, is that the FBI must account for the huge sums Congress presses upon it, right

down to the final box of paper clips, but the CIA operates under no such fretful inhibition.

The spooks simply wait upon an informal gathering of top-ranking members of House and Senate Appropriation committees, explain their anticipated needs, and get the money. No CIA appropriation as such ever goes thru the Congress, since the total (which approaches \$1 billion) is said to be secret. Instead the sum is sub-divided into handy items and buried in the appropriations for other departments of Government. Ten thousand tomahawks for the Indian Bureau, at \$100 each? Don't bet it isn't spook money.

No other branch of Government enjoys the high-riding irresponsibility of CIA. The Atomic Energy Commission, which contains enough secrets to destroy earth, operates under a legislative watchdog committee that was established with the act that brought AEC into being. The Defense Department likewise lives under the scrutiny of House and Senate Armed Services committees.

Thus it is not a sound argument to contend that a joint CIA committee would become a sieve of information that would peril secret projects. Even Allen Dulles, who departed as head of CIA soon after the catastrophe at the Bay of Pigs, conceded in his otherwise non-revealing memoirs, "The Craft of Intelligence," that he knew of no betrayal of secret information by any member of Congress.

Lately the nation has witnessed the inevitable fruit of the

weaknesses inherent in such a policy. Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, revealed the five-year-old plot of a tawdry CIA comic opera in which the huge espionage apparatus was caught trying to penetrate the security department of Singapore. CIA promptly offered Prime Minister Lee (Western-educated, anti-communist, and a rare ray of sunshine in the morass of Asian politics) a \$3 million bribe to forget about it.

Mr. Lee proved incorruptible, which must have surprised the free-spending CIAers, and wrung a weasling letter of apology from Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Routine incompetence impelled State Department spokesmen to deny the episode when Mr. Lee revealed it, altho it was plain that the letter would eventually make maladroitness out of them.

The big point here is not so much that the State Department rushed to show its traditional stupidity, nor even that the CIA has managed to convert Prime Minister Lee from a potentially valuable friend to an implacable — and scornfully contemptuous — enemy. The point is that dangerous dime-novel nonsense such as our all-thumbs man in Singapore perpetrated is inevitable as long as the CIA is permitted to go its headlong, unrestrained way.

The theory that Congress already exercises sufficient control over our spy agency simply won't float. Which of the clubby little group of appropriations committee spook-watchers authorized the \$3 million bribe, or even knew about it? Was the two-headed author of the Singapore caper sacked, or is he comfortably tucked away in Stockholm clipping Red Star and planning new triumphs of clandestine diplomacy? This witness surely cannot answer those questions, and, more to the point, neither can the Congress.

The last time CIA found itself on the rack, Sen. Thomas Dodd (D., Conn.) read a speech (which the CIA had written) lamenting what was described as "CIA baiting." Sad to say, there will be occasion for much more of this baiting, until CIA is brought under the rule of law appropriate to an agency of government in a democracy.

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